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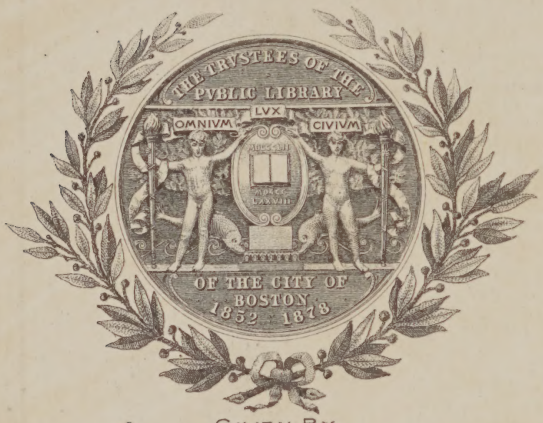

GIVEN BY

Hon. Wm Everett.

A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

DEDICATION

OF THE

Church of Brattle-Square Society,

ON THE CORNER OF

CLARENDON STREET AND COMMONWEALTH AVENUE,

DEC. 22, 1873.

BY S. K. LOTHROP.

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Hon. William Everett,

Oct. 30, 1896.

DEDICATORY SERMON.

IF it be sad to see old landmarks pass away, it is grateful to see new ones arise which shall in time become old. Our thoughts upon this subject should be healthy, not morbid. As we cannot annul, we should cheerfully submit to that law of change which is a necessary condition of our being on earth. Its results are often tokens of growth and prosperity. Though it may sometimes disturb our tenderest feelings and associations, and seem to lay unhallowed and destroying hands upon what can never be replaced, we should remember that change can absolutely destroy nothing worthy of perpetual life. It may remove the monument; but the fact, the history, the principle commemorated survive, and through the love and faith of human hearts shall have new and more fit forms of embodiment, expression, and culture.

Within a few years, eight or ten of our religious societies, whose houses of worship had come to be in the midst of the city's business and traffic, have removed from long-consecrated spots to new, better, and more appropriate situations; and occasionally in the public press, and oftener in private talk, there have been unwise and unhealthy lamentations over these changes. Would we go back to the Boston of fifty years ago, that these churches might still be vigorous and useful on their old spots; or, having the Boston of to-day,

would we leave these churches stranded and useless on their old spots, to be monuments then not simply of change, but of decay and death? If people remove their social homes, is the law of religious association so much stronger, that they cannot remove their religious homes? These removed churches are not dead: they have only received new and increased life. Their history, and the moral influence and power of that history, are not extinct, and cannot be extinguished.

On removing from Chauncy Place to its present noble structure, the First Church carried with it all its history and traditions from the days of Cotton and the mud-built walls of its first little structure on State Street, and these have power now, and will have, so long as the First Church continues a living Christian organization, no matter where it worships. The Second Church, when its neighboring edifice is completed, will embody there its traditions and associations; and though its walls will never echo with the sound of his voice, like the old temple in Hanover Street, yet to the living members the name of Henry Ware will ever have the power to touch the heart and conscience, and stir them to devout thoughts and Christian deeds. Trinity Church, when it completes the massive structure it proposes to erect, will be "Old Trinity" still, as in Summer Street, in the days of Bishop Parker, Dr. Gardiner, and other noble servants of the Lord who have ministered at its altar; and whatever there may be of moral power, of tender and personal association, in its individual history will be embodied and transmitted in its new temple of worship.

The old Roman Catholic Cathedral on Franklin Street has gone, but the noblest part of it survives; and when completed, to every intelligent Roman Catholic, familiar with the history of his church in Boston, that grand Basilica on Washington Street will soon become fragrant with the

name and the fame of those two memorable bishops, — the saintly Cheverus, and the wise, accomplished, and devoted Fitzpatrick.

The Old South, so intimately associated with many events in our revolutionary struggle, will not die, though the house in which that society so long worshipped pass to other uses. Bricks and mortar are not alive. It is the living organization that gives power to the memories and associations that gather around them, and these memories and associations go where the living organization goes. The Old South, worshipping in its new house on a neighboring street, will be the Old South still, with all that there is of living power and glory in its history and traditions gathered there uninjured. We may well hope, therefore, that the Brattle-Square society will survive transplanting from the spot where it worshipped for more than one hundred and seventy years, and in its new place and new edifice will embody and transmit all that history, all those traditions and associations, that give it a claim to the affectionate reverence of its members and to the favorable regards of the community, in which for so many years it has exerted its measure of influence and is entitled to its share of honor. At the call of this society, we gather here this evening to dedicate, by simple and appropriate services, their new structure to its high and holy uses; and our gathering should be, not in morbid regret for departed landmarks, or lamentations over changes that were unavoidable, but in a cheerful spirit, with grateful, hopeful hearts.

In this spirit I would speak, and as indicating the thoughts I propose to present, have selected for my text these words: —

"The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." — JOHN iv. 23.

"By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." — HEB. x. 20.

This house, simple, massive, beautiful, — not free, I suppose, from those imperfections which must attach to every conception of human genius and every work of human hands, but still a very noble, appropriate, convenient, and impressive structure — has been erected for the purposes of Christian worship and instruction; for the administration of the gospel according to the forms, ideas, and principles known in ecclesiastical polity as Independent Congregationalism. What is this gospel which we seek to administer here; what its essential basis and truth? From the simplicity of its organization, forms, and modes of worship; their harmony with the declaration of the text; their resemblance to those of the primitive Christian churches; their elastic adaptation to the progress of religious thought, — what claim has Independent Congregationalism to such regard that we should desire to cleave to it and uphold it? These questions seem pertinent to the occasion; and to some thoughts in the direction they indicate I invite your attention.

What is Christianity in its essential basis and truth? Christianity is a divine revelation. But divine revelations are various. Nature is a revelation: "things seen and temporal have at all times declared things unseen and eternal." Individuals may receive revelations, spiritual illuminations of mind influencing character and conduct. All Christians believe in the influences of the Holy Spirit: some, the Friends or Quakers, that these influences are specially discernible, separate them from the ordinary action of the mind, and reverently follow them as distinct intimations of the divine will. But if a revelation of moral and religious truth is to pass out from him to whom it is made, and become a power, an authority, a law to others, it must be attested by some outward facts or evidences, and thus the revelation and the revealer become at once histori-

cal. This is the case with the gospel. It is primarily historical, a religion embodied in facts which go to prove that it is a revelation, a direct communication from the divine wisdom and goodness. Christianity has a record of its origin and early history, which claims to have been written by those who were eye-witnesses and contemporaries of what they narrate. In this record natural and supernatural facts, and moral and religious teachings, are so marvellously blended that they must stand or fall together. You cannot retain for either, when separated, that divine significance and authority which attach to both in their union. Prove that this record must be rejected as untrue, unreliable; and Christianity has no longer any claim to be a revelation, and as a religion it is shorn of its authority, and of its power to conquer the world. Prove this record to be worthy of belief, to be received as historically true; and Christianity abides as a revelation and as a religion; it abides a mighty power, the light of the world. I may assume, before those whom I address, that this record is true and reliable; and the Apostles' Creed, as it is called, largely an enunciation of the facts in Christ's history, and unquestionably one of the earliest epitomes of faith accepted and used by the church, is an evidence that the early Christians regarded their religion as a religion of facts, from which its doctrines were to be inferred or deduced, and which gave authority to the moral truths and precepts connected with them.

Christianity is a religion of facts, and its great fact is Christ himself. He is presented and portrayed to us in the record as Emmanuel, "God with us," a divine person or soul in a human form, walking the earth in the form of a Galilean peasant, yet acting with the wisdom, power, and goodness of God; thus combining and presenting in himself, as the son of God and son of man, an image from which to form our highest conceptions of God, and a model

and a standard for men, — an impulse to the highest efforts humanity can make, and the loftiest attainments humanity can reach. This fact is the basis of Christian faith; from its interpretation spring the divergences in Christian theology. Some, looking first and chiefly on the divine side of Christ, studying his life, character, deeds, words, in the light which streams from that side, feel justified or constrained to exalt Christ to Supreme Deity, co-equal, co-eternal with the Father, and thus find refuge and rest to their souls in the Trinity and in the ideas and doctrines involved in that mystery. Others, looking first and chiefly at the human side of Christ, studying the record in the light which streams therefrom, beholding the winning beauty and moral glory of his character in its human relations and developments, listening to his oft-repeated declaration, "My Father is greater than I," and to his distinct disavowal of the attribute of Omniscience, even in his divine relations as the Son of God, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man; no not the angels, neither the Son, but the Father only," are brought to believe in the simple unity and supreme Deity of the Father alone: and, in regard to Christ as presented in the New Testament, to believe that his being is a creation, and not original and self-existent; that his power is derived and conferred, not necessarily inherent; that his wisdom is a gift from the Infinite Source, the "Spirit poured without measure," and not an absolute possession; and that he is not himself God, but the mediator between God and man, sent to make a revelation, in precisely that form in which it was most needed, — a human manifestation of God, God in humanity, — in order to bring religion from the abstract into the concrete, and make it take hold, not simply of the faith, but of the affections and sympathies of the human soul, and so lead us to God by that "new and living way which He hath consecrated through the veil,

that is to say, his flesh" — his manifestation of God in humanity.

Now both these great divergences, and all the lesser ones that may be found between them, lie, so to speak, in the plane of Scripture. Those who thus diverge rest on the New Testament record, as the first and only source of any reliable knowledge that we can get of Christ and his gospel. They receive the facts of that record, and study Christ as he is portrayed, delineated, embodied in them, and cleave in faith to the results of that study. They all stand therefore upon common ground, the ground of the New Testament. But if a man's divergence carry him beyond and outside the plane of Scripture; if he reject the record and deny its facts, or accept only such small, fragmentary portions of it, here and there, as he approves, or chooses to believe, he seems to have passed the line that entrenches the Gospel as a divine revelation, and becomes a believer not in Christ, but in himself.

The facts of the New Testament; Christ as portrayed, delineated, developed in these facts; received and studied with an earnest, living, loving faith that shall determine the personal relations of the soul to himself and to the Father, control the affections of the heart, the efforts of the will, the aspirations and conduct of the life; is not here a just definition of Christianity, broad and simple, liberal enough and orthodox enough for all practical purposes? The difficulty in framing a brief, comprehensive answer to the question, "What is Christianity? and who may claim and wear the Christian name?" is enhanced by the idea, largely encouraged in some quarters, that there is some illiberality, some want of charity, in any answer or definition that excludes anybody who chooses to claim it. But is this so? Christianity, like every other religion, must have something that is essential to it. There must be somewhere

some line that marks it as distinct and separate from every other religion.

There are things good and true in the Koran. I believe them. Am I therefore a Mohammedan? May I claim the name? Is it exclusive and uncharitable in the Mohammedan to deny me the name? Certainly not; because the very essence of Mohammedanism is that Mohammed was and is the great prophet of God, with a later commission, and a wisdom and power that transcended that of Moses and Christ.

So there are many things good, beautiful, true, in the New Testament, — for instance, in the "Sermon on the Mount." Am I a Christian simply because I believe that sermon to be good, beautiful, and true, but care not whether it was uttered by Christ or by Judas Iscariot, or am doubtful, and rather disposed to deny that there ever was a real, personal Christ who did utter it, as described in the record? Have I a right to claim the Christian name on this ground alone? Is it illiberal or uncharitable to deny that claim, if this is about all of Christianity I believe and accept? Certainly not; because the very essence of Christianity is that there was a real personal Christ, specially anointed and sent of God, who did utter that sermon on that mountain's brow, speaking out of the depths of the infinite wisdom, or, as the record has it, "with authority, and not as the scribes and Pharisees." The foundation, the corner-stone upon which Christianity rests, is Christ as portrayed and presented in the New Testament. There is little or no difference in our conceptions of the Christian character, or the great qualities or attributes that compose it. To love the Lord our God with all the heart, mind, soul, strength, and our brother as ourselves, and by the strong and efficacious working of these principles to be brought and kept in certain definite relations to God, to the

world, to sin, to righteousness, to death, and to immortal life; and to be led thereby to cultivate faith, hope, love, trust, humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, tenderness, integrity, purity, and spiritual-mindedness, — here is a brief delineation of the qualities that compose the Christian character. Whether this character can be reached or exist without having or acknowledging a Christian origin, and so become coincident with Christian requirements without being Christian is a question we need not stop to discuss, further than to say that the history and testimony of the world, outside of Christianity, seem to deny that it can. Be this as it may: the Christian believer, the true disciple of Christ, is one who, having these principles, brought into these relations, and cultivating these virtues as described, acknowledges that all this, in source and result, is from and through Christ, "faith in him, and spiritual fellowship with him."

Christianity carries with it the idea that God has given us Christ to be the moral and spiritual leader of mankind. He came anointed of God to "show us the Father," and by that "showing" quicken us to faith, love, holiness, and a union with God by purity and prayer and an absolute consecration to him. He came to reveal to us the possibilities of our nature in its duty and destiny, and as a being, tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin, — tried only to be perfected and glorified through suffering, — to solve the problem of life, by showing that the end of all its discipline is to prepare us through childlike faith and obedience on earth for spiritual enjoyment and the open vision of God in heaven. This idea of Christ as specially sent, anointed of God is inherent in Christianity. *It is Christianity.* To abandon it is to abandon Christianity.

But within the broad range of this idea there may be room for wide differences of theological dogma, form, organization, modes of worship and administration. It is

natural that those who agree upon these points should unite, and that those who differ should to some extent separate. There cannot be, God does not mean there should be, a more absolute union and a more universal uniformity in religion than in other matters. He must have a narrow conception both of God and his Providence, who thinks that all this division of Christendom into various sects, denominations and parties, many of them in strong opposition and contrast to each other, is something simply wrong and mischievous, exhibited to the shame and not the honor of the gospel, illustrating its weakness rather than its power and the glorious liberty it allows. There may be a large unity of spirit under all this permitted and unavoidable diversity.

Israel of old had twelve tribes, and each tribe had something peculiar to itself, its own symbol, standard, and watchword, under which it gathered: but all beheld the cloudy pillar, and all were guided by the fiery column; and, whether resting or on the march, all ranged themselves in a common glad allegiance around the ark of the covenant, which they followed and guarded with reverent faith and devotion. And so all these Christian sects and denominations, with something peculiar to each, may have something grander and nobler that is common to all; namely, a devout loyalty to Christ as the light of the world, a firm allegiance to the banner of his cross as it floats over and guides the onward march of humanity through the mighty sweep of the ages. The glory of any church, or of any sect or party in the church, is commonly not that which is peculiar to itself and separates it from others, but the extent to which it has that which is, or should be, common to them all; viz., the spirit of Christ, faith in him, a faithful following of him as "the way, the truth, and the life." Most of the broader divisions of the Christian church — Greek, Roman,

Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational, and others — are founded, not so much on essential differences in purely theological dogma or doctrine, as upon differences in forms of organization, modes of worship, and the ideas and principles upon which the gospel is to be administered; and the evil influence they exert comes not so much from the divisions themselves as from the narrow, bigoted, exclusive, intolerant idea, which each of them more or less distinctly entertains, that its own modes, forms, organization, and administration are the only scriptural and allowable ones, are particularly acceptable to God, the signs and tokens of a higher holiness, the sure passports to the divine favor. I rejoice, my friends, in what I believe to be our Christian, and know to be in this land our civil, liberty in regard to faith, forms, and modes of worship: and as it is a liberty existing, recognized, established, let no one use it as a cloak of maliciousness, or abuse it by an assumption of arrogance and intolerance. Let no individual do this, and no church will do it, or will soon cease to do it. Let every man use his own liberty, and leave others to use theirs.

If a man like the general organization and administration of the Roman Catholic Church, the ideas and principles upon which that church is instituted; if he approve of the confessional, if he believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, if he be awed at the elevation of the host, if he be impressed by the glorious music and the more or less of dramatic display in its forms; if these things meet his tastes, touch his heart, quicken his conscience, give the gospel power to make him a holier and a better man, — then let him adhere to or join the Catholic Church, and thank God for the privilege and opportunity; but let him not insist that only in and through that church can the cry of penitence reach the ear of the Almighty, or faith secure the help of the divine blessing, or the humble

and devout soul find the doors of the kingdom of heaven opened for it to enter therein.

And so if a man, as a framework for the administration of the gospel, approve of the Protestant Episcopal Church of England or of the United States of America, if he prefer to hear grand and devout prayers read, and have them nearly the same under all circumstances and for every Sunday in the year, if the comprehensive supplications of the litany and the varying responses by the people meet his tastes and judgment; in short, if a ritual and liturgical service touch his heart and conscience, and make him a holier and a better man, more humble, devout, and meet for the kingdom of heaven, then let him adhere to or join the Episcopal Church, and thank God for the privilege and opportunity; but let him not insist that this is the only form of organization and worship allowable under the gospel; that the use of this form alone marks *the* church of Christ, and is so especially God-appointed and God-approved that it has a monopoly of the divine benediction, and opens the only sure and certain path to the divine presence.

And so, also, if the blood of the old Puritan Congregationalists of England or America run in a man's veins and throb in his heart, if the traditions of his family, if the influences, or, if you choose to call them so, the prejudices, of his education make him like the simplicity of congregational organization and worship, the freedom and elasticity with which it adapts itself to all circumstances, to the changes and progress of religious thought and the necessities of human condition, if this form approve itself to his judgment and helps the gospel to touch the deep places of his soul and make him a just, pure, devout Christian man, then let him adhere to or join the Congregational Church, and thank God for the privilege and opportunity; but let him

not be so small, narrow, bigoted, as to hold that all that can give glory to God or do good to man, all that will be approved in heaven or can be used on earth as a mode of religious organization and worship, is confined to Congregationalism alone.

Brethren, let us understand and admit that, in this country at least, all these different sects, denominations, and parties in the Christian church stand upon common ground, and, if sincere and true to their convictions, have an equal right to be. These divisions, and all these diversities of form and worship, are of insignificant moment save as they touch the heart and become expressions of the faith and feelings of the soul. We may reverently assume that when there is in both a like hearty, sincere faith, God will look with as much complacency upon the plain church, the plain garb, silent assembly and worship of the Quaker or Friend, as upon the most gorgeous display of the grandest cathedral service that ever pope, cardinal, or bishop took part in; that he never has, and never will make it a question in his own infinite mind whether to send down the quickening and sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit upon the one rather than the other. He will send them upon both; he will send them upon all according as under their differing forms, in humbleness and gratitude, they open their hearts to receive them. God cares not in what form or language the prayer be offered, provided it come from the heart, and be the sincere uplifting of the soul. Christianity is not primarily a question about forms; the posture of the body, the cut or color of the garments, the language of the lips, but a question of the heart and life. Its triumphs are not confined to any of the forms or organizations under which it is administered. All may claim a share and present noble and glorious illustrations of these triumphs.

The object of Christianity in its spirit and truths, its hopes and sanctions, is to come into contact with the passions, impulses, and desires of the human heart, to purify that heart from selfishness and worldliness, to sanctify it and make it strong in the Lord, armed with a majestic power, to trample upon all temptation from within or without, to pursue the solitary ways of duty, unshaken, unseduced, till it becomes a dear child of God, meet for inheritance with the saints in light. This is the great object of the gospel, and this object it has accomplished and can accomplish under all the various forms in which it has been embodied and administered.

The thoughts which I have presented seem to be in harmony with the first passage of the text: "The true worshippers of the Father must worship Him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." These words of the Divine Master are not to be interpreted as a condemnation of all forms as unimportant or unnecessary, but simply as inculcating the importance, the necessity, of that inward grace of the spirit which can alone breathe into any forms their efficacy, whether used for the expression or impression of religious faith and feeling. Spirit and form! there is an indissoluble relation between them. Spirit, so far as we know and comprehend it, cannot manifest itself without form; and in religion form is dead, an unmeaning sham and show, unless spirit animate it, give it life and power. In our hearts, they act and react upon each other. The essence, the very marrow of the gospel, is in the facts of Christ's life and in the great spiritual ideas, truths, principles, which he enunciated, and so simply yet grandly illustrated in his own character. It is, therefore, the most spiritual religion ever promulgated among men; yet it is not independent of forms, for it is addressed to men, and men are not independent of forms. However spiritual it may

be in its objects and requirements, it must have some forms, some organization, some mode of administration, through which, as an outward institution, a holy and beneficent religion, it may be upheld and diffused, and its power over the heart and conscience applied and increased. But under the declaration of the text, demanding, whatever our forms, that we "worship the Father in spirit and truth," a large liberty seems to be allowed us in this respect.

Two propositions seem to be very distinctly established by the New Testament record and history. First, that Christ, while he contemplated that there should, and knew that there would, be some organization, a Christian church or churches, for advancement of his gospel and the furtherance of the great objects of his mission, did not himself give any explicit rules or directions as to the form of this organization or the modes of its action. Second, that the apostles themselves went forth to execute their high commission to "preach the gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," without any preconceived plan of organization or action, through which that commission was to be executed. Christ furnished the facts, truths, ideas, principles, spirit, that was to form and impregnate his church; and his apostles, imbued with these, in the exercise of their own judgment and under such guidance and inspiration as were given, went forth to promulgate them to the world and provide instrumentalities for their diffusion and enforcement. They went forth "to preach the gospel." Naturally, and as their history shows, they went first to their own people, the Jews; and not only in Judea, but outside of it, in every important Greek and Roman city, the synagogue afforded them the readiest access both to their countrymen, the Jews, and to the Gentile public. These synagogues they entered; in them they spoke and gathered converts; and "wherever,"

says Archbishop Whately, with a candor and independence that do him honor, — "wherever a Jewish synagogue existed, that was brought, the whole or the chief part of it, to embrace the gospel, the apostles did not there so much form a Christian church or congregation, as make an existing congregation Christian by introducing the Christian sacraments and worship, and establishing whatever regulations were requisite for the newly adopted faith, leaving the machinery of government, so to speak, unchanged."

The first Christian churches or assemblies, therefore, were gathered in or from the synagogues, and corresponded to them in their internal organization. Now these synagogues were independent societies or bodies, not wanting towards each other in the offices of sympathy, advice, counsel, but each absolutely independent of every other, possessing and exercising the right to elect its own rulers or officers, and qualify them for their duties of reading and expounding the law and conducting the services of worship, to receive or reject proselytes, to admit or exclude members, — in short, to manage their own affairs in their own way, according to their own judgment, by a free, popular vote. The first Christian churches, formed after the synagogue pattern in the apostolic age, seem to have been Independent Congregational churches. We do not say that this proves conclusively Independent Congregationalism to be the only true, good, allowable, acceptable form of organization and administration for the Christian church; on the contrary, we maintain that there is a large liberty allowed in this respect. But we do say that this is one of the reasons why we like it, honor it, and feel it to be our duty to adhere to and uphold it. Questions of interpretation may be raised, differences of opinion may and do exist, and we leave every man to be fully persuaded in his own mind; yet thus much, to say the least,

seems to be clear, that Independent Congregationalism has as much scriptural authority to support it as any other form of organization of the Christian church. I may not stop to confirm this by general references and quotations from the New Testament: but let me refer you to one instance, clearly and strongly favoring our Congregational ideas and principles; namely, the first chapter in the Acts of the Apostles, where Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, numbering about one hundred and twenty, — the first Christian church at Jerusalem, — and proposed the choice of some one to fill the place of the traitor Judas. From this account it does not appear that the apostles claimed any right, authority, or pre-eminence in the matter. The record leaves it uncertain whether the designation of the two persons as candidates, Joseph and Matthias, proceeded from them, or from some of the disciples, or the church collectively. The words at the close of Peter's address, "and they appointed two," prove conclusively that they were not appointed by Peter. He was prominent from his nature, not from his office. He assumes no special or superior authority. He gives advice, not commands; he proposes action, not orders it. He addresses them as equals, "men and brethren," not as children or inferiors. In the whole record or account of this important meeting of the primitive Christian church, and its action in the choice of an apostle to fill the traitor's place, there is no assumption or recognition of any special authority, or principalities, or powers, or orders, one above another. The scene presented is simply that of a genuine Christian brotherhood, in which ability and zeal naturally had their legitimate influence and power; but where every thing is done upon those principles of individual liberty, judgment, and the consent of the majority, which so distinctly mark Independent Congregationalism. This scene, therefore, — this first meeting and action

of the primitive Christian church at Jerusalem, — becomes to us a model worthy of honor and of imitation.

We like Independent Congregationalism, because it is thus, as we read the New Testament, in conformity to the primitive churches and early Christian history. We like it, because it is in harmony with the very genius and spirit of Christianity as illustrated in Christ's own life and character. We like it, because it has the grace and dignity of simplicity; because it uses only so much of form and outward institution as is requisite for obedience to Paul's instruction to the Corinthians, "Let every thing be done decently and in order;" because it aims by its forms to impress not so much the senses as the heart, and to give, not large and imposing display, but simply expression and culture to the spirit. We like it, because, through this simplicity, it upholds and encourages the idea that the efficacy of Christian worship, and of all the offices and exercises of Christian administration, depends upon the character and ability, the personal piety, sincerity, and zeal of those who administer them, and not upon any mysterious properties or qualities attaching by apostolic inheritance or descent to the office of the priesthood, and thus makes the influence of the Christian church and the Christian ministry to be in harmony with the influences and operations of God's spirit and providence in other things.

We like Independent Congregationalism, because it has an honorable history. It began with the gospel. It was the primitive form of church organization under which Christianity achieved its first great triumphs, and under no other form, perhaps, would it have attained a like success. Had the apostles gone forth making such pretensions, proclaiming such ideas and principles for the administration of the new religion as have since been urged in their name, and, under their authority, have obtained great sway in the

Christian world, they would have failed; they would have awakened no interest or sympathy in the breasts of the poor and lowly; they would have aroused opposition among the great and powerful, and the State, always jealous of rival authority, would have put forth its power, more firmly even than it did, to crush a religion whose progress threatened the establishment of a mighty spiritual despotism. The apostles succeeded, because they claimed not "to exercise lordship over God's heritage." They succeeded, because the only idea of a Christian church or society, which they had and attempted to realize, was the beautiful image of a religious fraternity, each member made free by the truth and spirit of Christ, and all striving together in purity, love and zeal for the promotion of godliness among men. They succeeded, because of the congregational simplicity and freedom which they stamped upon the worship and organization of the early church. Under this form or organization, in which no man had any authority but that which his age, his wisdom, his experience, his learning, his piety, his devotedness, and not simply his office, might give him, Christianity was gradually diffused till it became so generally the religion of the people, that Constantine thought it wise to make it the religion of the State.

The support and alliance of temporal power wrought a great change in the relations of Christianity to the world around it. A progress in a direction opposite to freedom and simplicity was then entered upon, which culminated in the great Roman hierarchy. But the great ideas and principles of Congregationalism inherent in the primitive church have never been entirely lost or abandoned in Christendom. Some of them were pretty distinctly announced and maintained by the Novatians, Donatists, Paulicians, and other subsequent sects, denounced as heretics and schismatics by the ruling power in the church. Some traces of them,

however faint, may be found in what we term the dark ages; and not long after the light which penetrated the ignorance and superstition of those ages began to dawn upon Christian thought and action, these ideas and principles were announced by Wickliffe with a distinctness and power that gained for him the name of the "The Morning-star of Reformation;" and from Wickliffe's day they have never been without assertion more or less distinct; and some three centuries ago, a resurrection as it were from the first three centuries of the Christian era, they were distinctly embodied in separate churches or congregations, who claimed to have within themselves all the rights, powers, and prerogatives that belong to the church of Christ, acknowledged no spiritual authority outside of their own body except Christ, the great Head of the church; and maintained that the scriptures are the source of Christian knowledge and the authority for Christian faith.

Like every other branch of the church, Independent Congregationalism has had its martyrs, whose services and sacrifices have given it increase, strength, and power. Some of these, exiles as well as martyrs, brought it to this country more than two centuries ago; and here, with nothing to oppose it but the howling wilderness and the untutored savage, it has made more free and unfettered development than elsewhere.

But it may be said, "This development was not all beautiful and Christian; there is a dark spot, a deep stain upon it in this country. The Puritan Congregationalists in Massachusetts became intolerant and persecuting, were cruel and severe towards those who differed from them."

I admit the fact; but, in view of all the circumstances, and with a fair judgment of every thing connected with it, is the spot so dark, the stain so deep, as many would make it? These Puritan Congregationalists had learned the les-

sons of persecution in bitterness and sorrow at home; and, coming to this country to purchase here at the cost of terrible sacrifices the liberty of worshipping God according to the dictates of their own consciences, and asking none to follow them but such as agreed with them, is it a marvellous thing that they thought at first of inflicting upon intruders, whom they regarded as dangerous to their infant state, some of the same persecution they had endured themselves? Is it wonderful that for a moment they held to the lips of others that same bitter cup that had been so remorselessly held to their own, and from which they escaped only by becoming exiles from their native land? But they soon worked themselves free from that which was not only not inherent but in opposition to the ideas and principles both of their church and civil organization. If it be to their shame that they persecuted, it is more to their honor that the persecution was brief and soon ceased. It is to their honor that while they were an overwhelming majority and had the power in their own hands, they recognized and established here by their own votes a religious liberty and toleration greater than was then known or enjoyed in any other American colony outside New England. I say not that these men were perfect, without spot or blemish, that no alloy was in that bright and glorious gold; but I do say that the gold was distinctly stamped with the image and the superscription of heaven. I do say that I have small respect for the man whose soul is so narrow, whose moral discernment is so feeble and limited, that he cannot look beneath their faults, errors, and mistakes, and recognize the sterling qualities of their characters, their firmness of principle, their devotion to truth, their adherence to right, their love of liberty, their entire consecration to Christ and God in righteousness and faith. Does not the world owe them, not only reverence and honor, but a great debt of gratitude for their

influence upon the cause both of civil and religious liberty? To say nothing of England, which even Hume admits is more indebted to the Puritan for its civil and religious liberty than to any other party, is it not very largely through our fathers, the Puritan Congregationalists, that America, our country, has gotten all this glory and privilege we now enjoy? I know that there were many powerful causes, commercial and political, at work to help on the result; but strike out the influence of New England, of the Puritan Congregationalism of New England, from 1620 to 1776, let it never have existed or been exerted, would there remain elements that could have built up this great American Republic, — a fountain and a bulwark of civil and religious liberty? It may at least be doubted whether there would. I rejoice, therefore, that our new church is to be dedicated on this 22d of December, so long counted and observed as Forefather's Day; and under its inspiration, I feel prompted to say that we ourselves, as their descendants, need not be much disturbed; and the millions who have entered into our privileges — adherents of churches that never granted any liberty that they could prevent being wrested from them — have little occasion to cast it in our teeth as a reproach, that, for a very brief season, amid their early struggles for existence, the Puritan Congregationalists of Massachusetts did some things weak, cruel, wrong, in violation of liberty and right, toward those whom they regarded as intruders, disturbers of the public peace, and dangerous to the State.

I honor Independent Congregationalism, because it is largely the source of, and altogether in harmony with, the spirit and the form of the civil institutions of our country; and as for the men themselves, our early fathers, the old Puritan Congregationalists, if we are capable of discriminating between the substantial and the incidental, capable

of appreciating the excellent, of loving what is good, of admiring what is noble, we shall be careful how we sneer at them, exaggerate their faults and overlook their virtues; rather shall we feel and humbly acknowledge that could we attain to like real and living faith, become as devout in piety, as resolute in duty, as firm in principle, as pure in motive and self-sacrificing in action, as true to our highest convictions and aspirations as they were, we should be nearer to God and higher in the kingdom of heaven than we are now.

I may not detain you longer, brethren. I could hardly avoid detaining you so long. We believe that Independent Congregationalism, through the scriptural authority in its support, and its resemblance to the primitive churches; through its freedom, simplicity, and elastic adaptation to the changes and progress of religious thought, and its honorable history, has a right to be as one of those forms of Christian worship and administration which cannot but do good in any community where it is upheld. Therefore, with tender but not morbid regrets, from an imperative sense of duty, we left our glorious old church, in the heart of the city, and coming down into this more appropriate and convenient spot, have erected this new one, not in the spirit of strife or proselytism, but in the spirit of love and faith, from the conviction that, where there is room enough for all to work, and work enough for all to do, we could better do our share, fill our place here, amid the residences of the people, where the prospect of new life, of increased temporal and spiritual growth, and a long-continued existence, is so much more favorable. Our work done, our temple finished, we meet here now to dedicate it to God, and humbly ask him to accept it, and bless it with the presence of his Spirit. In behalf of the church and society lately worshipping in Brattle Square, and in my own behalf as

their pastor and servant, I now dedicate this structure, and set it apart to the holy and religious uses for which it is designed; I dedicate it to the service and worship (to use the language of our covenant) of "the one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and to the honor and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world;" I dedicate it to the preaching of the truth he taught, to the culture of the spirit he exhibited, to the quickening of all the holy hopes and principles his gospel brings with it; I dedicate it to the authority and liberty of the gospel, — that divine authority announced in the emphatic words of the Master: "I am the way, the truth and the life; the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me,"— that glorious liberty which abounds where the Spirit of the Lord is, which, while it calls no man master, finds its source, its guide, and its healthful limitation in the love and reverence with which it calls Jesus "Master and Lord." I dedicate it to all the holy uses to which it can be put to advance the kingdom of Christ in our souls and in the world. May God accept the work of our hands, the gift of our hearts! and, ever and always sending down his blessed Spirit, may he so hallow and sanctify this temple that it shall ever be holy and sacred to us and to all who shall come up hither for worship and instruction! and, so long as these noble and massive walls shall stand, may no words of bitterness or wrath or railing or uncharitableness, no words of doubt or scepticism or unbelief, no words that would take from God his glory, from Christ his authority, from his gospel its power, be uttered in this pulpit! This pulpit, — the desk of sacred instruction, — in behalf of that Independent Congregationalism which we honor, and which our fathers of earlier and later generations have made glorious by their

services and sacrifices, — this pulpit I dedicate to truth and faith in Christ, — not a Christ of human origin and development, but of divine appointment and authority, the Son of God, the Word made flesh, bringing a revelation not out of man's instincts and intuitions, but out of the eternal wisdom and love, — proclaiming a moral law whose authority is not of man's judgment, but the Almighty's utterance, and whose weighty sanction and promise of immortality rest not alone on the soul's instincts, longings, or reasoning, but on the riven sepulchre in the garden, and the majestic declaration, "I am the resurrection and the life."

My brethren, I dedicate this whole church from turret to foundation-stone, with all its appliances of beauty, of comfort and convenience, to the furtherance, in its simplicity, purity, and power, of that glorious gospel of the Son of God with which the rights, interests, liberties, progress, happiness, and everlasting blessedness of mankind are so closely bound up, — that gospel which has survived all convulsions, triumphed in all conflicts, worked itself free from all the perils and corruption that human weakness has from time to time engrafted upon it, and which has now before it in all the world a future immense and glorious, and this, because, though born in a lowly lot, even the Bethlehem manger, the Almighty God was its Father, and its life partakes of his omnipotence and eternity.

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